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SOME THOUGHTS ON THE POLITICAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE JAPANESE PEOPLE

PART V

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POLITICAL PARTIES AND TENDENCIES

The constitution of Japan makes no provision for political parties, though we consider them essential in carrying out a modern constitutional government.

As an aid to our understanding of our particular topic of investigation—the influences of clan and family upon the political life of the people—does the history of political parties in Japan teach us anything? Let us see.

To write a history of Japanese political parties is not our present mission. That has already been done by others.¹ Moreover, to offer a history, or list of mere names, without sufficient explanation and detailed statement of their origin, could benefit no one. It is a most difficult undertaking to frame a table of these parties since the first one appeared. I have repeatedly tried it without satisfactory results. No two of the learned writers above cited agree in regard to such an outline. The reason for this will appear as we proceed.

¹ Lay, A. H., Esq., *Transactions Asiatic Society of Japan*, Vol. XXX, pt. 3, pp. 363–462; “The Political Parties of Japan,” a good outline down to 1902.

Satoh, Henry, *Evolution of Political Parties in Japan*. Tokyo, 1914; also a good account, though meager, down to 1914; but lacking in historical balance.

Ukita, Dr. Kazutani, in *Okuma Fifty Years of New Japan*, Vol. I, pp. 133–193; moderately clear, with valuable sidelights, down to 1908.

Uyehara, as above, pp. 250–273, valuable down to 1909.

McLaren, W. W., *Transactions Asiatic Society of Japan*, Vol. XLII, pt. 2, pp. 782–806.

Brinkley, as above, *Japan Weekly Mail*, various volumes.

Without, however, attempting such a detailed statement, some reference as to the genesis of the party system in Japan is necessary.

The shogunate had fallen; the feudal lords still retained their fiefs; a young man of seventeen had come to the throne, without experience in government, and lacking any adequate knowledge of his people. He had been born and reared in closest seclusion. Scarcely one in a million of his subjects had ever seen him. His advisers had put into his mouth the oft-quoted and fundamentally important imperial oath, (*go seimon*)² which is authoritatively translated as follows:

1. Public councils shall be recognized, and all governmental affairs shall be decided by general discussion.

2. All classes, both rulers and ruled, shall with one heart devote themselves to the advancement of the national interests.

3. All the civil or military officials and all the common people shall be allowed to realize their own aspirations, and to evince their active characteristics.

4. All base customs of former times shall be abolished, and justice and equity as they are universally recognized shall be followed.

5. Knowledge shall be sought for throughout the world, and thus the foundations of the empire shall be extended.

This was the starting point. Representatives were called by the emperor from each of the daimiates to form an advisory body or deliberative assembly, called the *gisei*, under the *dajōkan*, or government. On April 18, 1869, was opened at Tokyo the *kōgiijō*, or place for public discussion. This was composed of 276 members, one from each of the daimiates. These persons represented not the people but the governing class; but the object was to encourage deliberative assemblies. The name *kōgiijō* was soon changed to *shūgi-in*, which is the name now applied to the house of representatives in the imperial diet. It thus in a way perpetuates the enlightened spirit of the great Emperor Meiji. But the method of its construction, the nature of the restrictions placed upon it, and the total lack of interest in political life on the part of the people led to its being

² April 6, 1868.

ignored, except as a receptacle for the petitions from the people, and it soon fell into disuse, and on June 24, 1873, was entirely abolished.

The following is a list of the important men who made the Japan of today possible. They were then enterprising, loyal and young men, and to them fell the duty of stepping into the breach and leading the country into the way of civilized governments.³ No history of the Meiji Era can be written and leave these names out. In order to guide the reader aright, I mention the date of birth and section or clan from which they come. They are:

Shimpachi Etō, (1835–1874), Saga
 Shōjirō Gôtō (1837–1897), Kōchi
 Tomomi Iwakura (Prince) (1825–1883), Owari
 Hirobumi Itō (Prince) (1841–1909), Chōshū
 Kaoru Inoyue (1835–), Yamaguchi
 Ki Inukai (1855–), Okayama
 Taisuke Itagaki (1837–1919), Kochi
 Tarō Katsura (1849–1913), Chōshū
 Kōin Kidō (1834–1877), Yamaguchi
 Kenkichi Kataoka (—)
 Kentaro Kaneko (1853–), Fukuoka
 Jutarō Kokura (1855–), Hyuga
 Hironaka Kōnō (1849–), Fukushima
 Hiroyuki Katō (1836–), Izuchi
 Masayoshi Massukata (1840–), Satsuma
 Arinori Mōri (1847–1889), Satsuma
 Munimitsu Mutsu (1844–1897), Wakayama
 Toshimichi Ōkubo (1832–1878), Satsuma
 Shigenobu Ōkuma (1838–), Saga
 Kimmonji Saionji (1849), Kyoto (Kuge)
 Takamori Saigō (1827–1877), Satsuma
 Taneomi Soejima (—1905), Saga
 Aritomo Yamagata (1838), Chōshū
 Nobuyuki Nakajima (—), Kōchi

Every one of them is a *samurai*. Keep that in mind. They *all* come from southern Japan, and they are practically all from Satsuma and Chōshū regions. They were all born about the same time, were all educated in the same manner, and were all working for the same end, namely, the restoration of the imperial house, and securing the rights of the people.

³ *Okuma*, Vol. I, p. 141.

In 1871, Prince Iwakura, accompanied by Kidō, Ōkubo, Itō and others, visited America and Europe on a special mission, to secure revision of the treaties. The treaties were not then revised, but these men gained most valuable information on many lines, and saw that a Constitution was demanded for their nation. Two political currents arose in the minds of the leaders. One party wanted gradual progress at home and a conciliatory polity toward other nations; the other, rapid progress at home and a vigorous foreign policy. The peace party, supported by Ōkubo and Iwakura prevailed, and Saigō, Itagaki, Soejima, Itō and Gōtō resigned their offices.⁴ These protestants, led by Itagaki, then presented an important memorial to the government, asking for the establishment of political institutions. Popular discussion arose among the leaders, and the seeds of political institutions were here first planted. Early in 1874 an attack was made upon Iwakura in Tokyo, because he opposed war with Korea on account of her insolent letters to the Japanese government, the war project being also strongly urged by Saigō.

By an imperial decree of May 2, 1874, a deliberative assembly of local authorities was called which was opened by the emperor in person, June 20, 1875. Kidō became the first president. To the surprise and disappointment of the friends of popular government, of that day, these local authorities thought the country was not yet ready for a national assembly, the majority favoring local assemblies only, for the time being. The common people were taking no interest in the new national life. Public discussion increased, the press sought to stir the people, and this brought the wrath of the authorities down upon the press in the form of restrictions, and public speech was also curtailed. Editors were imprisoned and consternation reigned.

On September 6, 1876, Prince Arisugawa announced that to the *Genro-in*, or senate, had been entrusted the duty of drafting a constitution; but the Satsuma rebellion of Janu-

⁴ Black, John R., *Young Japan*, Vol. II, p. 409.

ary, 1877, put a check upon all such peaceful political activity. The students of the private school (Shi-Gakko) in Kagoshima took up arms against the government, and forced the leadership upon Saigō. Disgruntled because he could not induce the government to attack Korea and punish her, disappointed because the *samurai* as a class seemed to be losing their place of power, appealed to by thousands of *samurai*, the left-overs whom the government could not at once employ as officers, soldiers or police, and who were unfitted by training for any ordinary labor, and impelled also by the Satsuma clan spirit,—perhaps the strongest force of all—Saigō yielded and civil war began. The government won the day, and Saigō and his generals, seeing they were defeated, ended their lives in the orthodox way, by committing *seppuku*. The lessons of permanent value growing out of this war were the growing strength of the new government and the demonstration of the fact that the common people could fight. Compelled to face the flower of the *Samurai* swordsmen, as the government troops were—this was the first use of the commoners in war—the people had won. This greatly heartened the new leaders. Itagaki, through the aid of Kenkichi Kataoka, presented May 14, 1877, to the emperor in Kyoto, a memorial asking for the creation of constitutional institutions, including a representative assembly popularly elected. But the conservative elements were still strong and repressive measures were taken. Kataoka, later to become the Christian president of the house of representatives for several successive sessions, and Mutsu, later Count and Japan's greatest modern diplomat, with other good men, were on suspicion thrust into prison. But the attempt to suppress the popular movement only increased the determination of the oppressed, and tended to crystallize political ambitions. Public discussion persisted, in spite of the police. Among the friends of the people were, however, occasionally found those who were impatient to see results, and who wanted all restraint at once removed. On May 14, 1878, six of these mistaken enthusiasts murdered Ōkubō, the strong man and pillar of the state, because, as they claimed, he

obstructed open discussion and trampled upon the rights of the people. This was a great mistake. He should have lived to aid the people for many years, and enjoy the fruits of his sacrifices for them. But the event convinced the leading conservatives that they must hasten on with the reforms.

In September an important meeting was held at Osaka of representatives of the people's idea, with the result that the *Aikokusha*, or Patriotic Society, founded in 1874 but suspended because of governmental opposition, was resuscitated. This is notable, because out of the *Aikokusha* the first political party was really born.

In 1880, a third meeting of the *Aikokusha* sent a petition to the government, signed by 100,000 persons, asking for a national assembly. Progress seemed now to be made. But the government, hearing of the convention, suddenly enacted a law restricting public meetings, enforced it on the same day, and by telegraph ordered the dissolution of the convention. The leaders having heard what the government was likely to do, instantly passed a resolution to continue the organization until they had secured a national assembly, and recristened their society the *Kokkai Kisei Domei Kwai*, or League for the Establishment of a National Assembly. They chose Kataoka and Kōnō to forward the petition to the government. The repressive measures of the government strengthened the opposition and was a means of educating the people politically. Shigenobu Okuma was prominent in the government at this time, and distinguished himself by opposing the government measures which denied the people their national rights.

Events now began to take political form. On October 29, 1881, the *Jiyūtō*, Liberal Party, the first real political party in the land, was organized by Itagaki, at the Ibumaruro, a restaurant in Asakusa, Tokyo. This party was really an outgrowth of the *Domei-kai* above mentioned, and for which Itagaki had so long striven. Government recognition was really not given till July 8, 1882, but the deed had been done and liberty had now a concrete name in the land.

And now comes another illustration of the clan spirit. Itagaki and Okuma had been working constantly for one and the same end. They were in constant touch with each other. They had been and still remained friends. In principle they had no differences. Why should not Okuma join forces with Itagaki in the *Jiyūtō*, and so strengthen the common cause? But no, Okuma started his own party, April 1, 1882, called the *Rikken Kaishin-to*, or Constitutional Progressive Party. And thus the story of parties in Japan has run almost to the present day. The clan spirit disrupts and weakens political life. But more of this later.

The temptation at this point to trace the individual attempts to form parties, and to follow them to their fall or absorption with other parties is great, and the story interesting; but space is not sufficient. We must be content with noting the major accomplishments as they occur. Political parties so-called now spring up in great profusion. Forbidden by restrictive government measures to become legally political in name or character, there appeared all over the land clubs, societies, meetings, political groups of people, under the lead of some man more or less prominent, these groups having a great variety of names and meeting with great difficulties. But out of this stormy political sea, fog-bound, and swept now and again by waves of bureaucratic repression, there rises an island of hope. Out of the multitude of party groups, some unity and cohesion were at last to come.

With the object of controlling the parties, the government issued in 1882 a law forbidding political parties to have branches of their city or main organizations in the provinces. Of course this was a severe blow to the parties, and greatly impeded their progress. To repress and destroy rather than develop and control seemed to be the idea of the rulers. This repression tended to produce a class of lawbreakers. It also encouraged sentiment rather than fixed principles which should become the basis of political party life. When Mr. Itagaki was addressing a meeting at Gifu, April 6, 1882, one Shokei Aibara attempted to assassinate him, but at this critical moment the intrepid Itagaki shouted: "Itagaki may perish, but not liberty."

The continued restrictions upon speech and press began to discourage some of the leaders of the people's cause, and some of the best men such as Okuma, Ozaki, Shimada, Inukai and Kōnō resigned from the parties. By 1884, matters had come to be much worse. The political parties already formed were dissolved and all seemed to be waiting for something to turn up.

Itō, who had been sent by the emperor to America and Europe, in February, 1882, to examine political institutions and report, came back in August, 1882, and by March, 1884, a bureau for investigating constitutions had been formed in the imperial household department, and Ito became head of the department.

On October 12, 1881, the emperor issued a decree solemnly promising to convene a national assembly in the twenty-third year of Meiji, 1890. This wise move probably would have pacified the politicians had the government really taken them into its confidence and sought their aid; but the Constitution was being drafted behind closed doors and in profound secrecy,⁵ and restlessness continued. In order to pave the way for a house of peers, new orders of nobility were to be created, as notified July 7, 1884. There were to be princes, marquises, viscounts, counts and barons, five classes, who would number about 500 in all.

The first cabinet was organized with Itō as its head, and began its tenure of office December, 1885, as already outlined.

Itagaki and Gōtō had used great influence to bring the political leaders together, and to attain this end the *Daido-danketsu* was formed in 1887, thus increasing political activity. Then the government again came down upon these dangerous activities with the *Ho-an Jo-rei*, or Peace Preservation Regulations, of December 25, 1887. This law prohibited secret associations under a penalty of minor confinement of not less than one month nor more than two years, in addition to a fine of from 10 to 100 yen. Under this ban fell many good men, among whom were Hoshi,

⁵ Viscount Kaneko, in *Japan Advertiser*, February 12, 1919, an authority on the matter.

Hayashi, Nakajima, Ozaki, Kataoka, and hundreds of others, whose Christmas present was banishment from Tokyo. This reactionary move caused profound excitement. Still the government was pressing forward on the path of progress, and the next step in this line was the formation of the *sūmitsu-in*, or privy council, on April 28, 1888. Of this body also Itō was made president.

On May 25, 1888, the first draft of the Constitution was laid before this privy council for consideration in the presence of the emperor.

On February 1 of this year, a happy event was the reconciliation of Count Okuma with his colleagues, and his return to office in the government. He was made minister of foreign affairs, and soon undertook the work of treaty revision with some fourteen foreign powers, resulting in the new treaty with England July 16, 1894.

On February 11, 1889, *kingensetsu*, or anniversary of the birth of the Japanese nation, their Fourth of July, the emperor promulgated the constitution for which the people had been waiting all these long years.

How unspeakably sad was it, however, that Buntaro Nishino, a Shintō fanatic, chose this glad day on which to assassinate Arinori Mōri, the minister of education, and one of the people's best friends. What a co-incident, and what a pleasure, on the other hand, it is to the writer to be inditing this article on this particular 11th day of February, 1919, just thirty years from the birth of constitutional government in Japan, while Tokyo is celebrating with royal display this significant event, while the booming of one hundred guns is ringing in my ears, and to have lived here through all the years since the birth of the first political party, since the first drafting of the constitution began, and to have witnessed the struggle of a brave people towards constitutional government!

But these were politically heated and dangerous times. Late in 1888, Mr. Gōtō had begun "stump speaking" among the people of the northeast provinces, to awaken interest and encourage political union. Treaty revision had been a burning question. Men could not think dispassionately.

On October 18, 1889, Count Okuma came very near losing his life, and did lose one of his legs, at the hands of an assassin named Kuroshima, who threw a bomb at his carriage as it was entering the gate of the foreign office. But this is by no means the only instance in which the old warrior has been similarly attacked.

The first election under the new constitution took place July 1, 1890, resulting in the disclosure of the following political parties as represented in the first session of the diet: Independents, 69; Daidō-ha, 55; Kaishintō 46; Aikokutō 35; Hōshu-tō, (Conservatives) 22; Kyūshū Shimpō-tō, 21; Jiyūtō 16; Jishi-tō, 17; Officials, 18; uncertain, 2; a total of 300 members in the lower house. The lack of party unity is painfully apparent. In the very same month the bureaucrats showed their teeth by promulgating the law of public meetings, the object of which was to discourage the union of small political groups into a large and strong party which might, they feared, be found in opposition to the government. The Jiyūtō and the Kyūshū party both dissolved at once. Other dissolutions and combinations followed.

On November 29, 1890, the first session of the diet opened with a brief address by the emperor in person, Count Itō becoming president of the *kazoku-in*, and Mr. Nobuyuki Nakajima a member of the *Jiyuto*, president of the lower house, or *shugi-in*. The first session of the diet gave the Yamagata Cabinet great concern, but there was no open break since it consented to reduce the budget 6,590,000 yen; but with the second session the fight began a battle which has not even yet ceased. It has been from the first essentially a clan fight against the parties.

With the formation of the diet, the *genrō-in*, or senate, was abolished, having naturally lost itself in the *kazoku-in*. This was a step in political progress. To trace from this time on the ups and down of political parties would occupy too much space. A reference to the tables of imperial diet sessions and of elections reveals a period of more than ten years in which repeated dissolutions and elections occurred, neither government nor people making any decided progress.

In fact no *regular* election occurred until 1902, and then again none till 1908. Neither clan statesmen nor people were willing to yield, but both were gradually learning political wisdom and gaining in its practice. Collisions of rather serious nature have occasionally occurred, but at the right moment a mere mention of the imperial wish has usually served to bring order and progress. Any event like a foreign war instantly quiets all discord and unites parties solidly in the country's defense. When peace comes again, clan strife is likely soon to appear.

Political parties have occasionally formed a working union with the government, as did the Jiyūtō in 1895; but these unions have until now proven impracticable because they had no strong foundation. Itagaki and Okuma were at times brought into the cabinet; but they were never able to endure for any length of time the clan influences there.

On the breaking up of the Matsukata cabinet in December 1897, because it would not yield in any way to the opposition, Count Itō for the third time assumed the reins of government and made an effort to form an alliance with one of the two stronger parties, but in this he failed. The fact is that Itō himself was coming to feel that the Prussian methods foreshadowed in the constitution and practiced since political parties had come into existence were driving the people into a mood which would become dangerous. The government had not in the Japanese people the Prussian masses to deal with. Hence in the twelfth session of the diet the amended election law was passed, abolishing the property qualifications for members of the lower house, reducing the tax qualifications for electors, and establishing larger electoral districts, except in cities. This change in the law doubled at once the number of electors, and was a decided step forward in constitutional government.

But Itō had failed to get party support in the diet. The fight of the people against increased taxation served to unite the opposition more closely for the time being. Okuma and Itagaki had dissolved their old parties, the Shimpō-tō and the Jiyūtō, and had formed a strong opposition party called the Kensei-tō, or Constitutional Party. On June

24, 1897, the formation of a government party was discussed by all the government leaders in the presence of the emperor. It was at this meeting, it is said, that the break between Itō and Yamagata occurred—a breach which it required years to heal. Failing to get support for his government party ideas, and seeing that no cabinet could long hope to develop constitutionalism without a party to back it, Itō the next day handed his resignation to the emperor and turned the leadership of the government over to Okuma and Itagaki, who at once proceeded to form the so-called first party cabinet in Japan. In reality it was not a party cabinet, and lacked the necessary cohesion. But it was the kind of experiment necessary to show the parties how political foundations must be built. Okuma became premier and Itagaki home minister, and the leading positions in the cabinet were taken by members of the two former parties, now united. One fact to be well noticed is that this is the first time that any member of the lower house had been included in the cabinet. Another is that a few days before the formation of this cabinet the peace preservation regulations above mentioned were abolished.⁶ But the peers, led by Yamagata, were strongly opposed to a party cabinet, and a great uproar was raised on August 20, when Mr. Ozaki, as minister of education, in addressing an educational society happened to use the word “republic” as of possible application to Japan. For this slip in his speech, the minister was compelled to resign his office.

On October 31, 1897, the Okuma-Itagaki ministry, rent by internal strife, laid down their portfolios, and on November 8, a cabinet headed by Marquis Yamagata was announced. It was composed of Sat-Chō clan statesmen only. The Marquis, though seeking at first to conciliate the opposition, let it be known that they must continue the elder statesmen as necessary. The *Kenseitō* led by Okuma, however, agreed to an increase of the land-tax, a measure necessary to the financial strengthening of the state.

⁶ Lay, as above, p. 439.

Marquis Itō, in 1899, went to the provinces with lectures on the necessity of reconstructing the political parties; this was education in the right direction. He was not, however, persuaded to enter the *Kenseitō* as requested, but on September 15, 1900, announced the formation of the *Rikken Seiyūkai*, or Friends of Constitutional Government, usually shortened to *Seiyūkai*, as a substitute for the *Kenseitō* and the *Jiyutō*, with himself as party leader. It should here be noted that the new party accepted Itō as leader absolutely on his own terms. The *Kenseihontō* or real Kensei party, then asked Count Okuma to become its head, and in December he did so, thus forming a sort of opposition party. The *Seiyūkai* now published a fairly comprehensive and satisfactory platform. All others up to this time had been practically the same mechanical and common-place affairs, apparently imitations of each other. This new platform suggested political principles and showed progress.

This fourth Ito cabinet has by some been called the second party cabinet; and it is true that its members mostly all belonged to the newly-found *Seiyūkai*; but it was rather the party of a man, and seemed likely to hold together as long as that man was its leader and no longer. Lacking any natural homogeneity of party to support him, and opposed constantly by the clan statesmen in the upper house, Marquis Itō turned the premiership over to Katsura, May 2, 1901, and himself sought to develop the *Seiyūkai* into a real political party. This party has remained in existence now for a score of years and finally controls the government under the present ministry of Mr. Hara.

The eighteenth session of the diet, May-June, 1903, was the occasion of the fight over naval expansion, the government finally withdrawing the bill after a conference between Premier Katsura and Marquis Itō, leader of the *Seiyūkai*. Weary with the constant opposition met with from the conservative elements and with the trials involved in training up a real political party, Marquis Itō accepted the invitation of his emperor to become president of the privy council, and turned the leadership of the *Seiyūkai* over to Marquis Saionji.

But the clouds of war now began to gather in the northwest. The long-dreaded day had come when Japan, to save herself from national overthrow, must fight Russia. With a unanimity which surprised every one, all political quarrels ceased, and as one man the nation went to meet Russia in Manchuria. This made possible to Mr. Katsura the record cabinet tenure in the political history of Japan to date—four years and seven months—while the average life of a cabinet for thirty-three years past has been but two years. In ordinary times no cabinet has long been able to remain in power. But no sooner had the treaty of Portsmouth been signed than another indication was seen of awakening ideas among the people. The publication of the conditions of peace brought riots in Tokyo of such nature and extent as to alarm the government, and Mr. Komura's return from Portsmouth had to be specially guarded. This event shook the bureaucratic foundation of things. Was it really coming to pass that the *people*, the *common people*, were unwilling to obey the dictates of the clan leaders? It must not be forgotten that, in Japan, not in Russia, the Russo-Japanese war was a *people's war* as none before or since has been. The people had sacrificed life and property without reluctance, and, after an unbroken series of victories on both land and sea, they felt that an indemnity was due them instead of countless years of taxation. They had begun to think. Of this thinking of its people the clan leaders have always stood in awe, and do so now.

Hastening on now, leaving to the student of these days the study of many points of interest, it is merely remarked that Katsura, being not particularly in favor of political parties, and meeting constant opposition on this line in the upper house, and among the *genrō*, threw down the reins of government. Saionji took them up, but his cabinet failed because of its fraudulent budget, it is said.⁷ Katsura came back to power July 14, 1908, and by a working understanding with Saionji, head of the *Seiyūkai*, remained at

⁷ Satoh, as above, p. 79.

the helm till August, 1911, when Saionji was called up again. The second Saionji cabinet failed, because, it is said, of his deceptive or insincere treatment of the two-divisions military expansion proposition under charge of General Uyehara, the minister of war. Prince Katsura had gone on a foreign tour and was recalled from St. Petersburg when the country met its tremendous loss in the death of Meiji Tennō. The Prince had, on the very day of his return,⁸ been made lord keeper of the privy seal and also lord chamberlain to the new emperor. Some call this a political trick of which Katsura was victim. It must be borne in mind that Prince Itō had been assassinated by a fanatical Korean on October 26, 1909 at Harbin, and now the young emperor needed near him, it was claimed, one of the strongest statesmen as councilor. Lifted thus to a place in the imperial house service, Katsura was supposed to be dead to politics. The *genrō* wanted to oust the government, and sought to find a successor to Saionji as premier; but men were growing suddenly scarce. Nearly a month passed amidst a perfect storm of indignation from press and people, when they turned again to Katsura, now made a prince, lifted him out of the service of the court, and set him up to form a new government. His cabinet assumed the reins December 21, 1912. But it had required an imperial order to Admiral Saitō to cause him to retain his office as minister of the navy.⁹

And now another important lesson was to be learned. Prince Katsura had formed his cabinet without a word to the *Seiyūkai*, which now commanded an absolute majority in the lower house. All attention was now concentrated on this issue. Suddenly Prince Katsura announced, early in January, that he was going to organize a new party, called the *Dōshikai*, or one mind party, with himself as its head. In doing this he evidently parted with his chief, Yamagata. He managed to collect between eighty and ninety supporters drawn from other parties. He had long

⁸ McLaren, *Transactions Asiatic Society of Japan*, Vol. XLII, pt. 2, p. 795.

⁹ McLaren, *Transactions Asiatic Society of Japan*, Vol. XLII, pt. 2, p. 797.

refused the premiership, said the critics, kept the *genrō* hunting for a leader, and now he would desert the young emperor, and take advantage of the situation to boost his own interests. The principal charge against him was his unwarranted requests to the throne for imperial rescripts in order to control the situation and defeat the parties. This was bringing the emperor into politics, and that Japan cannot stand. Public feeling had never appeared so determined. The *Seiyūkai* and the loyal part of the *Kokuminto*, the politicians and the people of Tokyo, were one. A riot broke out in Tokyo February 10, 1913, against "Katsura, the abuser of imperial authority."¹⁰ The diet had been suspended in an effort to compel the members to obey; the press had taken up the fight against Katsura, and he had found that he must either resign in defeat or secure the aid of the imperial name. An understanding with Saionji of the *Seiyūkai* had been reached, by which, if called by the emperor to special aid, he should summon his party to support Katsura. He was soon called to the imperial presence and asked to use his influence to tide over the crisis. Calling together all the members of his party in the lower house, Saionji delivered to them the imperial message, only to find them already strongly united to decline to follow their leader. This was tantamount to a refusal to obey the Imperial command!! Never before in history, it was said, had the people refused to obey a command from the throne. In 1900 Prince Itō had by a word from the throne controlled a most difficult situation. In 1913 the house would not listen. They held Prince Katsura wholly responsible, had advanced in political training far enough to be able to distinguish the real issues, and had developed party cohesion until they could defy him, and his government. Prince Katsura, the strongest clan politician in Japan, had been defeated by the people? He resigned in February, after but two months in the saddle, and died October 10, 1913, never, it is said, having recovered from the blow which this defeat gave him.

¹⁰ Satoh, as above, p. 87 and McLaren, *Transactions Asiatic Society of Japan*, Vol. XLII, pt. 2, p. 799.

Swiftly on the heels of this defeat of the government came another hint concerning this growing party power. Prince Yamagata, the chief of the conservatives, sought widely for a man to head the government but none could be found. Admiral Yamamoto of the navy, a Satsuma man, be it noted, appeared upon the scene and tried to persuade Saionji to again take up the task of leading the government, but the Marquis was growing wiser and declined. It thus fell to Yamamoto himself to take the responsibility of forming a cabinet, the *Seiyūkai* agreeing to support him.¹¹ This move, however, again stirred the clan rivalry between the army and the navy, a difficulty with which the country has for years had to contend. Reduction of taxation, readjustment of government finances followed, and Yamamoto seemed to be doing well; when suddenly the presentation of the budget to the lower house revealed the fact that the naval expansion scheme was to eat up all the savings made from various departments. The press started a campaign against increased naval expenditures, and popular dissatisfaction spread. Then the wires brought from London news of the Richter case,¹² revealing the existence of bribery and fraud in the navy. This naval scandal became the sensation of the day, and the interest taken in the matter by the common people was one of the very encouraging signs of progress. The matter got into the house of peers, also, and one of the most aged imperial nominees in the body made a fiery political speech, such as the walls of this circumspect house had never before listened to, condemning Yamamoto in the strongest terms, and then retired from the house for good. The people's representatives refused to agree with the upper house in restoring the budget, so that for the first time in the history of the diet, the body adjourned without having passed the budget, thus defeating the conservatives, and the naval plan, and necessitating the conduct of the government for the following year on the basis of

¹¹ Satoh, as above, p. 91.

¹² Satoh, as above, p. 93; also press of the day.

the previous year's budget. Mr. Yamamoto retired in defeat March 24, 1914.

Prince Yamagata, who is naturally of the army clan, now undertook to secure a man who would conduct the government to satisfy the prince himself. Prince Tokugawa, president of the house of peers was implored to head the cabinet, but refused. Men belonging to no political party were sought, but all refused. Viscount Kiyoura,¹³ who is a great admirer of Yamagata, finally consented to undertake the formation of a cabinet, and spent much time in the effort; but the conditions laid down by Admiral Katō, proposed minister of the navy, could not be met and Kiyoura had to confess defeat.

Another month of searching for a government leader had passed, and no man could be found, so that the bureaucrats were compelled to turn to their life-long political adversary, Count Okuma, who on April 16, 1914, amidst nation-wide rejoicing, again came to power. Although the government had no working majority in the diet, and the outlook was not the brightest for the aged statesman because of the certainty of opposition from the bureaucrats, the cabinet boldly undertook its task. The nation's hopes were high. When the diet proved obstructive, the government dissolved the diet, appealed to the country, and were sent back to power with the country's approval, and a party, the *Kenseitō*, behind them. This was clearly a victory for the people. Even Yamagata was coming to acknowledge the necessity of constitutional government.

It would have been over-sanguine to look for great political reforms and substantial advancement under the Okuma government. Onlookers in the United States and in Europe were evidently disappointed in the outcome. They were impatient for results, and did not understand the strength of the remaining feudalistic tendencies. The Okuma government fell because of its attitude toward China. The people of Japan have no desire to coerce China. The

¹³ *Japan Advertiser*, January 22, 1919, p. 2, by S. Akimoto; Satoh, as above, *Japan Press*.

twenty-one demands, backed of course by the military clan, sealed the fate of the Okuma ministry. The old hero could not stand against the opposing elements, and his government really accomplished little in the line of widely promised reform. But all the while a party was in building which later would come to power. The Terauchi cabinet was a setback to progressive principles in some ways,—was a conservative reaction to a limited extent—and, in turn, was overthrown because it could not satisfy the people. It lived two years, made no serious mistakes, was quite circumspect, but never for an hour got near the people.

At the fall of the Terauchi government great interest centered upon the action of the *genrō*. Would they venture to dictate the course of political progress? Marquis Saionji was asked to form a cabinet, and took a week to consider, then declined. The *genrō* were evidently much concerned. Their messengers flew hither and yon. The *Seiyūkai* had improved greatly in discipline and in the rank and file of its able men, so had the other parties. Mr. Takashi Hara, leader of the *Seiyūkai*, was finally summoned by the emperor, in a few hours named his cabinet, and with their accession to power began, September 29, 1918, the first genuinely party government in Japan. With the exception of Viscount Uchida, foreign minister, not a man of the nobility is to be found in the cabinet. While lacking nothing in political acumen or training, they are of the people—practical men and modern in spirit. They mingle with and know the people. Their treatment of the diet and the people is democratic. As members of the lower house, they take their seats in the body when voting. The tone of ministerial addresses to, and answers to questions from, the diet is that of equals to equals rather than that of the paternal or Prussian tone of superiors to inferiors.

Party government has at last begun in Japan. But let us not expect too much from it at once. The press will soon begin its chronic fault-finding; the bureaucrats will obstruct, and, worst of all, it will require yet a long time to awaken and educate the people. But Japanese democracy is coming.

The political parties of this present, or forty-first diet, stand as follows:¹⁴

<i>Seiyūkai</i>	165
<i>Kenseikai</i>	118
<i>Kokumintō</i>	37
<i>Shinsekai</i>	27
<i>Seiwa Club</i>	24
<i>Independent</i>	10

Tracing these chief parties back along the lines of their evolution as best one can¹⁵ the present *Seiyūkai* consists mainly of the former *Jiyūtō* elements with some of those of the *Kenseitō*; the *Kenseikai*, of the balance of the old *Kenseitō*, the *Kaishintō* and the *Shimpōtō*; while the *Kokumintō* gathers up the old *Kokumin Kyokai*, *Domei Club*, and other sympathetic elements, but even the attempt at alignment is unsatisfactory.

The writer feels keenly the imperfections, and the exceeding brevity of this sketch of the political parties of Japan. Summing up now as best we may the salient points of the case, what are the lessons to be learned?

1. One great hindrance to the proper political development of Japan along constitutional lines has been the stolid indifference of the people, their failure, largely to this hour, to take a personal interest in political questions. I have in this section, for the sake of brevity, spoken of the "people" as being in opposition to the bureaucrats and contending for their liberties. It has to be understood here that during all the battle for the liberties of the people from the restoration nearly to the present, it has been farsighted *leaders* of the people, themselves *Samurai*, who have represented the interests which belong to the people. And this *Samurai* class, the soldier-scholar, never amounting to more than 15 per cent of the population, have been defenders of the people as well as their oppressors. Since the Russo-Japanese War the people have been gradually awaking, but even now, outside the main centers, they know practically nothing about politics. Schooled for centuries to simply obey

¹⁴ *Japan Advertiser*, December 25, 1918.

¹⁵ *Japan Weekly Mail*, Vol. XV, p. 712.

and be cared for from above, their lethargy becomes a serious block to political progress.

2. Not only so, but neither the government nor the parties have made any serious effort to enlighten and lead the people in political affairs. As politics has been strictly tabooed in the schools of all grades and in the army and navy, and as educational men and religious leaders were excluded by law until recently from political office or the use of the franchise, and further as the discussions of politics by politicians before their constituencies have been almost wholly of a personal nature and with selfish rather than national ends in view, there has existed no medium by which the people would naturally secure instruction. Moreover, the rapid advance of the people in political acumen has never been desired by the bureaucrats.¹⁶ For their failure in this respect both government and political parties are now suffering.

3. Japanese political parties are built around persons, not principles. Here feudalistic influences are clearly manifest.¹⁷ And when an obstacle arises, or party administration suffers a test, or the personal leader is absent, how easy has it been to erect a golden calf and worship it. And it is in part for this reason here suggested that in Japan, political parties, the moment a crisis arises, begin to seek a path for compromise.¹⁸ We have from our nation's birth had in the United States two main political parties, and these parties change with the times. They have had their strong leaders who have at times wielded mighty influence. But parties have not disappeared merely because of a change of leaders, because they are built upon principles of political government. The day now begins to dawn in Japan when principles really play a part in political party life. Some day we may yet see the initiative, referendum and recall actually operative in the Sunrise Kingdom.

¹⁶ *Herald of Asia*, Vol. II, p. 132; *Japan Advertiser*, February 6, 1919.

¹⁷ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, 11th ed., Vol. V, p. 270; *The New East*, Vol. II, p. 302.

¹⁸ McLaren, *Transactions Asiatic Society of Japan*, Vol. XLII, pt. 2, pp. 291, 798, 800, 805; and McLaren, Vol. XLII, p. 788.

4. Party platforms have here meant practically nothing until now. The parties might, in fact, have traded platforms at almost any time without serious loss, provided the personal leader remained.

5. The failure of both government and people to make use of the diet as a valuable political instrument has to be noted. Instead of making this an effective school for both sides, as might have been done, the diet has until the present been chiefly a battleground for the clans. The wanton hostility of political parties generally to the government and the oppressive measures of the latter have resulted in a degree of stagnation, discouragement, and political corruption to a scandalous degree.¹⁹

6. A better adjustment of the franchise is loudly called for. In 1915 the number of highest taxpayers was 986,888. These comparatively wealthy men are given the right to choose their representatives in the house of peers, as outlined under that subject. Originally the wealth of the well-to-do was largely in land. Altered industrial conditions have largely changed the personnel of the wealthy class, and the possession of much taxable property is no longer an index to character. Furthermore, less than 2,000,000 of people do all the voting in political matters for 57,000,000 of people. Can any one suppose that this is a satisfactory state of affairs?

At the very moment of writing the above the following comes to hand:

At a meeting of the Reimeikai held last month the report of which is published in the *Chugai (International)*, Dr. K. Imai among other eminent speakers addressed the audience, insisting that the franchise should be extended to as many people as possible. In the course of the address the democratic doctor said: "Gentlemen: The world is wide awake. And Japan is still slumbering. What a contrast! If Japan wishes to catch up with the Powers she must take courage and take a decided step forward, and that immediately. What is to be more guarded against than reactionary thought is *selfish materialism*. The existing political parties are an embodiment of this evil form of materialism. The members of Parliament are the product of the existing election

¹⁹ *Herald of Asia*, Vol. II, pp. 100, 132, 164; *Japan Advertiser*, February 6, 1919, p. 4, ed.

law, and when a new election law is passed to replace the present, they will be the first to be thrown out of employment. Therefore I say that those who are most afraid of an extension of the franchise are the bureaucrats and the party-men."

Dr. Imai is a prominent man in Japan and his charge, selfish materialism, unquestionably holds against both government and political parties. When the average cost of election to the lower house approaches 10,000 yen per candidate and some men spend five or six times that amount for a seat, the time for radical reform has surely come.²⁰

7. The greatest obstacle for centuries to sound political government in Japan has been and is the strong clan influences which are the outgrowth of the people's history. It has embarrassed the best statesmen of the nation at critical periods of her history,²¹ Kidō, Ōkubo, Itagaki, Ōkuma, Itō, Saionji, Yamamoto,—all have suffered its baneful influences in their efforts for the people. Mr. Hara, because of its still existing influence, will fail to accomplish his deals for the people, and many will be disappointed in him. The clan spirit is manifest in the social life of the people, in religion, in marriage, in business. It directs in a measure the benevolences of the rich, and tends to deny the unfortunate poor, and the out-classed of the nation their just deserts. It is at the bottom of the ideas of the bureaucrats when they oppose a cabinet responsible to the lower house.²² It is a powerful factor in keeping up a system of taxation which is oppressive, unjust, and unnecessary. It maintains the principle that the portfolios of the army and navy must be held by officers active in these services, thus making it practically possible for those departments to dominate all other departments of government. This is a vicious policy, and Japan should throw those positions open at once to her civilian citizens. Every friend of Japan must have observed the danger here suggested.²³ The hopefulness of this whole situation regarding political

²⁰ *Japan Year Book*, 1912, p. 503.

²¹ *Herald of Asia*, Vol. V, p. 393; Vol. IV, p. 246.

²² McLaren, *Transactions Asiatic Society of Japan*, Vol. XLII, pt. 2, p. 791.

²³ McLaren, *Transactions Asiatic Society of Japan*, Vol. XLII, pt. 2, p. 796, 802.

party development in Japan lies in the rising political consciousness of the strong middle class. Democracy is in the air. Forward-looking men are using voice and pen in defense of the people. Students are becoming interested, and petitions are going from the people up to the imperial throne. The next ten years will witness important changes in the political life of Japan.